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ANCIENT BABYLONIAN EXPRESSIONS
OF THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT
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GEORGE A. BARTON
BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

There is no more fascinating field of study than the attempts of men to come into relationship with the unseen powers of the universe. These attempts vary with intellectual development all the way from the materialistic attempts of the savage to the spiritual and ethical conceptions of the highest religious systems. The most interesting phases of religious expression are those found at the two extremes of the evolutionary curve. Naturally no early system of religious thought can equal in interest that which stands at the verge of present knowledge and seeks to interpret the eternal mystery to the needs of present-day life. Next in interest, however, to this is the study of religious beginnings. There is about them something of the freshness of childhood, and we delight in following their thought as we delight in the expressions of children. It is because the Babylonian expressions of the religious spirit are expressions from the childhood of our race, that they become fascinating and important. It is true that they do not belong to the earliest childhood—they do not come from the period of savage life—but they express the religious conceptions, emotions, and aspirations of a great nation, composed by the amalgamation of two great races, just after the threshold between savage and civilized life had been passed. Ancient Babylonia had, in the whole course of its history, no great prophet to transform its religion. So far as we know no one attempted to do even what Amenophis IV tried unsuccessfully to do in Egypt. No prophet or reformer, like Amos, or Zarathushtra, or Gautama, or Vardhamāna, or Lao-tse, transformed religious thought and created in Babylonia a positive religion. No philosophers like the authors of the Upanishads and the projectors of the later systems of India, or like Socrates

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and Plato, subordinated the comparatively primitive conceptions of the universe to a more intellectual system of thought, and no great teacher like Confucius made these conceptions subordinate to an ethical system. Ethical conceptions were not lacking. For example in the *Maqlu* incantation-texts (2.81-84) we come upon this protestation of lofty conduct—a passage that reveals the Babylonian ideal of personal life:—

Those who were dying, I made to live;
Those who were cursed, I guided aright;
Those who were perishing, I rehabilitated;
Those who were weak, I strengthened.

This bit of ethical perception is, however, buried in a mass of ritual intended for exorcism. The compiler of the text betrays no conception that it was more important than the statements about spooks and vampires and the charmed words for their control by which it is surrounded.

If then, we would make a fair estimate of ancient Babylonian expressions of the religious spirit, we must compare them not with the sayings of Hebrew prophets, or the *Gāthās* of Zoroaster, or the utterances of India's philosophers and reformers, or the teachings of Lao-tse or Confucius, but with the religious utterances of Egypt, of Vedic India, and of China before the rise of her sages.

In Chinese literature some primitive religious expression has survived in the *Shu King*, or ancient book of history, the *Shih King*, or book of poetry, and the *Li Ki*, or book of rites. The revelation made by these books is reinforced by the survival in Chinese life of the belief in spirits, and the perpetuation in the state religion of an ancient ritual that finds many parallels in Babylonian ceremonial.

The Babylonian liturgies afford us glimpses of stately ceremonies on which great reliance was placed in maintaining friendly relations with the supernatural powers, and the one fact that stands out most prominently is that to the ancient Babylonians as to the Chinese the universe was peopled with myriads of invisible spirits. In Babylonia, China, and Egypt charms against spirits, exorcisms, and magic abounded. As yet, however, no Babylonian parallels have been discovered to parts of the Chinese *Shih King*, or book of poetry, or to the

love-poetry of the ancient Egyptians. The Babylonians shared with other peoples the tender passion. From Egypt love poems have come in which one finds such stanzas as this:—

New wine it is to hear thy voice;
I live for hearing it.
To see thee with each look,
Is better than eating and drinking.¹

Similarly in the pre-Confucian Shih King, or Book of Odes, there come to us from China, among poems that have more or less connection with the ritual, stanzas like this:—

If you will love me dear, my lord,
I'll pick up my skirts and cross the ford;
But if from your heart you turn me out . . .
Well you're not the only man about,
You silly, silly, silliest lout!²

If, however, any of the ancient Babylonians committed such sentiments as these to a clay tablet, it has not been discovered. If one of them ever directed a sonnet to his lady's eyebrow, he would seem to have been of too frugal a turn of mind to waste good clay in giving it permanence. Some few chronicles have come down to us from early times, but for the rest the literature consists of endless commercial transactions and religious epics, hymns, liturgies, and incantations.

The poetry of the Sumerians of Babylonia was in form of the simplest sort. Most of it consists of lines of similar length which make rude parallelisms. At times the length of these lines is very unequal. In some of the compositions a rhythm is apparent as one passes from line to line, but at times this also fails us. Sometimes as in some of the Hebrew Psalms a refrain is brought in at intervals, but such occurrences are not frequent. In parts of some of the penitential psalms a refrain occurs in every alternate line, as in Psalm 136 of the Psalter. These points may be briefly illustrated by quotations from a hymn to the mother goddess translated by Radau in the *Hilprecht Anniversary Volume*. The following passage illustrates both the rhythm and the refrain:—

¹ Cf. G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, Philadelphia, 1916, p. 416.

² From H. A. Giles, *History of Chinese Literature*, New York, 1901, p. 14.

To the king's holy foundation || with uplifted head I will go;
 To the foundation of the goddess || with uplifted head I will go;
 To the foundation of Idin-Dagan || with uplifted head I will go;
 For Dagal-Ushumgal-Anna || the bedchamber I will prepare.

Although there is in the Babylonian religious poetry nothing as beautiful as some of the hymns of the Veda, many passages have a dignified beauty of their own. Thus in the hymn just quoted we read:—

The abode of the holy one I will sanctify;
 Songs of praise I will sing to her;
 The glory of my princess in heaven and upon earth
 Aloud I will proclaim
 Unto my holy goddess;
 Before her I will rejoice:
 "Princess exalted to the heavens,
 Goddess, thou art sublime!
 Maiden goddess, thee must one reverence!
 Princess exalted to the heavens,
 Like Anu thou art sublime."

One who approaches the study of the ancient poetry of the Babylonians is met by an initial difficulty. The interpretation of the Sumerian language is still in its initial stages. The late Professor William James once said that he would not be so bold as to say that he knew what the teaching of Hegel was; that, if one thought he had an idea of what the great idealist meant, when he announced it, some ardent disciple of the German master would arise to say that that was all wrong; Hegel never meant that, but something quite different. It is still somewhat thus in the interpretation of Sumerian texts. We are never sure that we have caught the real meaning of a unilingual Sumerian text until its interpretation is established at the mouth of two or three witnesses; and sometimes the testimony of the witnesses is quite divergent. Nevertheless we do know enough of the form and content of ancient Babylonian religious expression, even in its Sumerian dress, to enable us to appraise its value and to compare it with other national expressions of the religious consciousness in the ancient Oriental world. If, however, I cite in the remarks that follow examples from unpublished texts that I alone have as yet had opportunity to study, you are duly warned to take the translations *cum grano salis* until others have had opportunity to study them also.

The earliest extant religious text from Babylonia—a text from the dynasty of Agade—is in many respects an excellent example of the whole. This is the text which I had the honor of bringing to the notice of this Society three years ago, and it will, I hope, be given to scholars within the next year in a volume now in preparation. It is an incantation. Those who composed it believed the air as full of demons as the Chinese do. A portion of the text consists of magic words which were believed to have power to ward off these spirits. Some of these words are:—

The light of the city—to the light of the city
Fly not!
The darkness of the city—to the darkness of the city
Fly not!
The people of the city—to the people of the city
Fly not!

(Col. x.)

The haunting terror expressed here is characteristic of much of ancient Babylonian life. A later text describes these spirits as follows:—

Destructive storms and evil winds are they,
An evil blast that heraldeth the baneful storm,
An evil blast forerunner of the baneful storm.
They are mighty children, mighty
Heralds of Pestilence,
Throne-bearers of Ninkigal (goddess of the Underworld)
They are the flood which rusheth through the land.

(Thompson, *Devils*, 1. 63.)

Another text speaks of them thus:—

From the Underworld have they gone forth:

• • • • • • • • • •
The evil spirit that in the desert smiteth the living man,
The evil demon that like a cloak enshroudeth the man,
The evil ghost, the evil demon that seize upon the body,
The hag-demon and ghoul that smite the body with sickness,
The phantom of night that in the desert roameth abroad,
Unto the side of the wanderer have drawn nigh,
Casting a woful fever upon his body.

(*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

From the haunting terror of this fear the Babylonians, like others, found from the earliest times some refuge in their belief

in favoring gods. Thus the cylinder from the Dynasty of Agade already cited makes the following appeal:—

O lord of darkness, protect man!
 O lord of light, protect man!
 O lord of the feast, protect man!
 O lord of the sanctuary, protect man!
 The grain for thy animals raise up!
 O god, be favorable to man!

(Col. iii.)

The faith that helpful spirits will protect is, however, universal among men and is the basis of all religion.

Even when friendly relations with such spirits had been established, misfortune and trouble still came. It was consequently supposed that the friendly spirits had been offended by some misdeed of the sufferer. Thus arose the so-called penitential psalms, which have been known and studied longer than any other kind of Babylonian religious literature. These psalms abound in such cries as that in a prayer to Ishtar³ :—

O lady, in sadness of heart I raise to thee my piteous cry, 'How long?'
 O lady, to thy servant speak pardon, let thy heart be appeased!
 To thy servant who suffers pain, grant favor!
 Turn thy gaze upon him, receive his entreaty!
 To thy servant with whom thou art angry, be favorable!
 O lady, my hands are bound, I turn to thee!
 For the sake of the exalted warrior, Shamash, thy beloved husband, take
 away my bonds!
 Through a long life let me walk before thee!

Such plaints as this have often been compared to some of the plaintive cries in the Hebrew Psalter. Nothing is known to me in the hymns of Egypt or in the Veda that possesses this penitential quality in like degree, although a few of the Vedic hymns to Varuna closely approach it. The conception of the spirits that prevailed in China rendered such expression unthinkable. Closely connected with the penitential literature are the dirges. Those that have come down to us are dirges for Tammuz, the god of vegetation, whose death was bewailed each year. Some of these have been made known, at least to scholars, through the translations of Professor Zimmern and others. There is in them much plaintive iteration, as, for example, in that published in *CT* 15. 18:—

³ From Haupt, *ASKT* 122.

The lord of vegetation no longer lives;
The lord of vegetation no longer lives [repeated six times; then:]
. . . . my husband no longer lives;
My god Damu no longer lives;
The god Ama-sunumgalanna no longer lives;
The lord of Arallu (Sheol) no longer lives;
The lord of Dur-gurgurri no longer lives;
The bright lord Tammuz no longer lives;
The lord of the dwelling no longer lives;
The spouse of the lady of heaven no longer lives;
The lord of Eturra no longer lives;
The brother of the mother of the vine no longer lives.

In a similar vein the dirge continues through many lines. It is, doubtless, a sample of the iteration with which human dead were bewailed.

From Egypt, where similar beliefs were held concerning the death and resurrection of Osiris, no such dirges have, so far as I know, come down to us. The Egyptian belief in the life beyond the grave led them to lay the emphasis on the resurrection of Osiris, a resurrection in which, in course of time, it was believed that all Egyptians might share, rather than upon his death. In Egyptian texts relating to Osiris there is accordingly a note of triumph and praise. In Babylonia, where no such vivid hope of a bright after-life was entertained, the emphasis was rather on the pathos of parting; hence such dirges as that quoted.

The heart of all religious worship is prayer, and from Babylonia not a few prayers have come to us. In these prayers the Babylonian deities are conceived in quite an anthropomorphic fashion. The prayers begin with words of praise which set forth in an impressive way the majesty and glory of the god. Such recognition of a deity's greatness predisposed him to be gracious to a suppliant that held such accurate views of the divine majesty. While this motive doubtless was present in the minds of those who composed the prayers, there was combined with it another motive. If a worshiper is to gain from the experience of prayer the psychological effect upon himself that is desirable, he must have a sense of the majesty, awe, and mystery of the divine being whom he approaches. In Egyptian temples—and the same is true (*mutatis mutandis*) of the temples of many other peoples—one approached the temple through avenues of

impressive sphinxes, he entered it through a majestic pylon, he approached the holy of holies through awe-inspiring courts and shadowy hypostyle halls. The approach suggested the majesty of the divinity that dwelt within. The suppliant was thrown by his approach into a devout frame of mind, so that he uttered his prayer in due humility and awe. Our Calvinistic forefathers, who worshiped in plain meeting-houses, accomplished the same psychological result by the use of majestic words, addressing God as the All-wise, Omnipotent Ruler, who dwells in the light that no man can approach unto, who is above cherubim and seraphim, who, himself holy, reads the inmost thought of sinful man, etc. In other words, by the employment of majestic phrases they created a psychological avenue of sphinxes and pylons through which the mind of the suppliant should pass, that it might be thrown into the proper spirit of prayer. In Babylonia both methods of creating the proper spirit were employed. The Babylonian temples, though apparently as a rule not so beautiful as the Egyptian temples of the days of the empire, were not lacking in the qualities that suggested to the mind of the worshiper the majesty of the indwelling divinity. But, as though this were not enough, their prayers, like those of the Puritans, began with expressions of the majesty of the god, which, couched in sonorous language, formed a psychological pylon as well. As an example we may take a prayer to Nergal published by L. W. King in his *Magic* (no. 27):—

O mighty, exalted lord, first-born of Nunamir,
 Prince of the Anunnaki, lord of battle,
 Offspring of Kutushar, the mighty queen,
 O Nergal, mighty one of the gods, darling of Ninmenna,
 Thou art in the brilliant heavens, lofty is thy station,
 Thou art great in the Under-world, thou hast no rival,
 With Ea among all the gods is thy counsel inscribed,
 With Sin in the heavens thou searchest through all things,
 Enlil thy father has granted thee the black-headed race, all living creatures,
 The cattle of the field, the animals, for thy hand to rule.

After this impressive approach comes the prayer:—

⁴ Translated also in Böllenrücher's *Gebete und Hymnen an Nergal*, Leipzig, 1904, p. 14 f. The above translation is independently made.

I, so and so, the son of so and so, am thy servant;
The wrath of a god and a goddess rests upon me;
Uprooting and destruction dwell in my house;
Calling without answer prostrates me.
Because thou savest, O lord, I turn to thy divinity!
Because thou art compassionate, I seek thee!
Because thou appearest compassionate, I look to thee!
Because thou art merciful, I stand before thee!
Really look upon me! Hearken to my cry!

This is but one example out of many that might be given.

The gods to whom such appeals were made were of complex origin. The tribal deity of an ancient clan was often supposed to express itself through many natural phenomena and to do whatever needed to be done for the tribe. The mingling of various tribes in the melting-pot of the lower Mesopotamian plain had created polytheism and led to some distribution of functions to different gods, but many of the deities even then retained their complex character. As time passed certain men were deified. It is well known that Naram-Sin, Dungi, Bur-Sin, and Gimil-Sin were deified while still living. This process seems to have gone on in the case of other men. In the University Museum in Philadelphia there is a ritual to Ur-Engur, recently published by Dr. Langdon. In another text, which I have had the privilege of studying (an incantation), Entemena appears as a deity under the name Entemen. The passage runs:—

With the god Entemen, the mighty prince, are thy first-fruits,
His grain is the brilliance of the broad land;
With weighty kernels its heads grow.
Like a gardener with fruit he comes,
 to his people who are disobedient.
The mountain of Entemen eagerly(?) he ascends;
 to the houses of men bowed down he comes;
The houses my protector establishes, he makes bright.

Further on in the next column a broken line runs:—

Favorable is Entemen. . . .

While the Babylonian deities were complex in character, after some of them had been identified with the sun and moon, the hymns addressed to them tend to attribute to these deities the characteristics of their respective heavenly bodies. Much of the

imagery by which the majesty of Utu or Shamash, and of Nannar, En-zu, or Sin is depicted is borrowed from the appearance, the course, and the functions of these orbs of light. The deeds of Adda, too, the storm-god, are portrayed in descriptions of storms. It thus comes about that in some Babylonian hymns we find descriptions of nature, or certain phases of nature. As an example of these we may take the hymn to the moon-god, Nannar, published in *CT* 15. 16, 17:—

O brilliant bark of the heavens, ruler in thy own right,

 Thou standest, thou standest
 Before thy father Enlil. Thou art ruler,
 Father Nannar; thou art ruler, thou art guide.
 O bark, when standing in the midst of heaven, thou art ruler,
 Father Nannar, thou ridest to the brilliant temple.
 Father Nannar, when like a ship thou goest in the midst of the deep,
 Thou goest, thou goest, thou goest,
 Thou goest, thou shinest anew, thou goest,
 Thou shinest anew, thou livest again, thou goest.

In these lines the sky is conceived as an ocean across which the moon sails as a ship sails across the sea. The Babylonians, like each of us, had watched the clouds flit across the moon's face, when it seemed as though the moon, not the clouds, were moving. If a cloud was especially thick, the moon disappeared for a time. All this is described in the words:—

Thou goest, thou goest, thou goest,
 Thou goest, thou shinest anew, thou goest.

The moon waxes and wanes. It seems to die and then is born again. This is depicted in the line:—

Thou shinest anew, thou livest again, thou goest.

The earlier of the moon's phases are alluded to in a later line:—

When thy father looketh on thee with joy, he commandeth thy waxing.

Similarly the destructive storms which sometimes sweep over Babylonia are graphically described in some of the hymns to Enlil. Apparently the original Babylonian conception attributed these storms to Enlil, the lord of spirits. At all events at a later period the effects of the word of Enlil are described under the figure of a storm. A passage from Reisner's *Sumerische Hymnen*, no. 7, will serve as an illustration.

The word of the lord, his word,
The word of the lord works disaster.
The word of Gula, her word,
The word of Enlil, the hero, lord of the great city,
Of him who comes from Meslam, great warrior with the dagger,
The word on high makes the heavens howl,
The word below makes the earth shudder,
The word brings destruction to the Anunnaki;
No seer receives it; no enchanter receives it.
It is an on-rushing whirlwind before which none can stand;
It makes the heavens roar, it makes the earth tremble.
The bond between mother and child it breaks,
It makes the luxuriant reeds to tremble, it shatters them.
The wheat-harvest it takes as spoil,
The on-rushing waters obliterate divisions,
It is a flood which breaks the dyke.
It rends asunder huge trees,
With a roar they are hurled to the ground.
When the hero, the lord of the great city makes a thunder-storm, no eye
beholds it.

No one can read descriptions of Babylonian thunderstorms, such, for example, as that by Dr. Peters in his *Nippur*, 1. 258-259, without realizing how true to experience this old Babylonian portrayal is. The passage not only gives us a vigorous description of a natural phenomenon, but reveals a point of view familiar to readers of the Old Testament. Just as the Hebrews thought thunder the 'voice of Yahweh,' so the Babylonians regarded it as the 'word' or 'utterance' of Enlil.

In one of the hymns in which the thunder of Enlil is described there is revealed an appreciation of a very different side of nature. This is the hymn published in *CT* 15. 15, 16. Lines 13 and 14 read:—

The lightning of thy thunder shatters the head of the great mountain, O
father Enlil;
Thy thunder fills the great mother Ninlil with fear!

This touch reveals the masculine Babylonian bully of a husband blustering about and his wife crouching in fear. Possibly it is the full-grown Babylonian boy making his sister jump by the startling and incongruous noises which he suddenly produces. In whatever way one looks at it, the passage is a touch of nature that reveals the kinship of the whole world.

When all is said, however, it must be confessed that the appreciation of nature expressed in the Babylonian hymns does not equal that manifested in the Vedic hymns, either in depth of insight or in beauty of expression. There is, for example, nothing to compare in beauty with Hymn 50 of the first book of the Rig-Veda. (I quote from Dr. John Muir's translation.)

By lustrous heralds led on high,
The fire sun ascends the sky;
His glory draweth every eye.

The stars which gleamed throughout the night,
Now scared, like thieves slink fast away,
Quenched by the splendor of thy ray.

Thy beams to men thy presence show;
Like blazing fires they seem to glow.

Conspicuous, rapid, source of light,
Thou makest all the welkin bright.

In sight of gods and mortal eyes,
In sight of heaven thou scalest the skies.

This Vedic poet embraced the whole scope of the sky in his view; Babylonian poets as a rule limit their view to one aspect closely connected with the god.

The Babylonians, as already noted, developed no such belief in a future life as was entertained by the ancient Egyptians. Perhaps at the beginning the conceptions of the two peoples concerning it were nearly parallel, but the Osiris myth gave the Egyptians a belief in a bright and happy immortality for that god—an immortality that was then believed to be shared by deceased kings and finally by all the people. In Babylonia the conception of the conditions of life after death are clearly set forth in the poem which describes Ishtar's descent to the lower world,

Where dust is their food, their sustenance, clay,
Light they do not see, in darkness they dwell.

The wistful longing of the Babylonians for a more cheerful immortality is touchingly revealed in the Gilgamesh epic through the attempt of Gilgamesh to attain a reunion with his friend Engidu, as well as in the closing lines of Ishtar's Descent. Both texts are well known. All such attempts seemed to the Baby-

lonians of no avail. Their attitude is summed up in two lines in the twelfth tablet of the epic:—

I will sit all day and weep!
I will sit all day and weep!

The well known myth of Adapa shows that, to the Babylonian mind, a cheerful immortality had been denied them by the gods through jealousy.

Mention of the Gilgamesh epic is a reminder that one important form of expression of the Babylonian religious spirit has not been mentioned: I refer to the epic. As India had her *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* and Greece her *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, so Babylonia had her Gilgamesh epic and her epics of creation. The Gilgamesh epic is of a miscellaneous character. It contains both a patriotic and a mythological element. The strands of the two are woven together in a fashion as delightfully confusing as one need desire in a document coming from such an early date.

The Babylonian genius delighted especially in endeavoring to trace origins, especially the origin of the gods, the world, man, and the institutions of settled, civilized life. The best known of these productions is the epic of Creation, a part of which was discovered by George Smith more than forty years ago—an epic divided into seven tablets or cantos. So much has been written of it, and it is so often quoted that it may be supposed to be familiar to all members of the Oriental Society, even those that are not professional scholars. The older poem on the origin of civilization, found in 1882 by Rassam at Abu Habba and afterward published by Dr. T. G. Pinches, is also well known.⁵ Still another creation-poem ascribed the creation to Ashur.⁶ This, of course, had its origin in Assyria and circulated there. Three years ago Dr. Poebel published an early poem on the creation found among the tablets from Nippur—a briefer account than the later ones, as befits a poem written before 2000 B. C.⁷ Still more recently Dr. Langdon published another text which

⁵ See L. W. King, *Seven Tablets of Creation*, London, 1902; R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, New York, 1912, p. 3 ff. and 47 ff.; G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 255 ff.

⁶ See King, *op. cit.* l. 197 ff.; Rogers, *op. cit.* p. 54 ff.

⁷ See A. Poebel, *Historical Texts*, Philadelphia, 1914, p. 9 ff.; Barton, *op. cit.* p. 278 ff.

portrays the origin of a city and the beginning of agriculture. Dr. Langdon saw in the text an account of the flood and the fall of man, which other scholars are unable to find in it, but the discussion to which this difference of interpretation has given rise has served to make scholars familiar with the existence of this interesting text.⁸

Perhaps I may be pardoned, if, in order to illustrate the kind of religious expression found in these poems and epics on crea-

OBVERSE

The mountain of heaven and earth
 The assembly of heaven, the great gods, entered. Afterwards
 Because Ashnan¹⁰ had not come forth, they conversed together.
 The land Tikku had not created ;
 5 For Tikku a temple platform had not been filled in,
 A lofty dwelling had not been built,
 The arable land was without any seed ;
 A well or a canal(?) had not been dug ;
 Horses(?) and cattle had not been brought forth,
 10 So that Ashnan could shepherd a corral ;
 The Anunna, the great gods, had made no plan ;
 There was no šes-grain of thirtyfold ;
 There was no šes-grain of fiftyfold ;
 Small grain, mountain grain, and large asal-grain there was not ;
 15 A possession and house there was not ;
 Tikku had neither entered a gate nor gone out ;
 Together with Nintu the lord had not brought forth men.
 The god Ug as leader came ; as leader he came forth to plan ;
 Mankind he planned ; many men were brought forth.
 20 Food and sleep he planned for them ;
 Clothing and dwellings he did not plan for them.
 The people with rushes and rope came,

⁸ See S. Langdon, *The Sumerian Epic of Paradise, the Flood and the Fall of Man*, Philadelphia, 1915; Prince, *JAOS* 36. 90-114, 269-273; Sayce, *Expository Times*, May, 1916; Jastrow, *JAOS* 36. 122-135 and *AJSL* 33. 91 ff.; Barton, *op. cit.* p. 283 ff. and Langdon, *JAOS* 36. 140-145.

⁹ The tablet has since been catalogued as no. 14005. It will be published in a forthcoming volume, *Miscellaneous Religious Texts*.

¹⁰ A god of vegetation; Brünnow's *List*, 7484.

tion, I quote from an unpublished tablet a poetical account of the creation of man and the beginnings of civilization which I have recently had the good fortune to discover among uncatalogued tablets from Nippur in the University Museum in Philadelphia.⁹ It was, as a colophon states, a tablet of sixty lines, and though somewhat broken at one end, not more than five whole lines are lost, though parts of several are fragmentary. The language of the tablet is Sumerian. It reads as follows:—

OBVERSE

*har-sag-an-ki-bi-da-ge
erim-an-ni dingir-dingir a-nun-na im-tur-ne-eš a-ba
mu ^{de}ezinu nu-in-da-má-da ub-še-da-an-dug-ga
kalam-mu ^{de}tik-ku nu-in-da-an-dim-ma-aš
5 ^{de}tik-ku-ra temen nu-mu-na-sig-ga-aš
tuš-up-pi-a ra¹¹-ub-šar-ra
ar nu-mê-a-am numun šar-ra
pu-e-x¹²-a-bi nu-in-tu-ud
anše-ra¹³ bir-eš-bi nu-in-tu-ud
10 mu ^{de}ezinu utul-umuna-bi apin
^{de}a-nun-na dingir gal-gal e-ne nu-mu-un-zu-ta-am
še-še-s erim-usu-am nu-gál-la-am
še-še-s erim-eninnu-am nu-gál-la-am
še-tur-tur še-kur-ra še-à-sal-gal-la nu-gál-la-am
15 šu-gar tuš-tuš-bi nu-gál-la-am
^{de}tik-ku nu-še-tur kà nu-il
en ^{de}nin-tu en kal-kal nu-in-tu-ud
^{de}ug¹⁴ maš tum-ma maš dú-da ê
nam-lù un-zu erim-nun-a gà-e-ne
20 gar-kù-šà-bi mu-un-zu-uš-am
tug-gi-tuš-tuš-bi nu-mu-un-zu-uš-am
uku ^{gi}gi-a-na-dur-bi mu-ê*

¹¹ *ra = la*, 'not'; cf. *Origin of Babylonian Writing*, no. 287^s. It is often employed in the Stele of Vultures in this sense; see for example col. xxi, 2, 3, *na-rú-a-bi ba-ra-pad-du*, 'this stele one shall not break.'

¹² The sign *x* is no. 606 in *The Origin of Babylonian Writing*. Its values are undetermined.

¹³ *anše-ra*, for *anše-kur-ra*. *kur* was omitted by the scribe.

¹⁴ In Semitic Shamash, the sun-god.

By making a dwelling a kindred was formed.
 To the gardens they brought irrigation ;
 25 On that day their [gardens] sprouted(?)
 Trees mountain and country.

REVERSE

Father Enlil(?)
 standing grain(?)
 for mankind
 creation of Entu
 5 Father Enlil,
 Duazagga, the way of the gods
 Duazagga, the brilliant, for my god I guard(?)
 Entu and Enlil with an incantation
 A dwelling for Ashnan from out of Duazagga I will [make
 for thee(?)].
 10 Two thirds of the fold perished(?) ;
 His plants for food he created for them ;
 Ashnan rained on the field for them ;
 The moist(?) wind and the fiery storm-cloud he created for
 them.
 Two thirds of the fold stood ;
 15 For the shepherd of the fold joy was disturbed.
 The house of rushes did not stand ;
 From Duazagga(?) joy departed.
 From his dwelling, a lofty height, his boat
 Descended ; from heaven he came
 20 To the dwelling of Ashnan ; the scepter he brought forth to
 them ;
 His brilliant city he raised up, he appointed for them ;
 The reed-country he planted ; he appointed for them ;
 The falling rain the hollows caught for them ;
 A dwelling-place was their land ; food made men multiply ;
 25 Prosperity entered the land ; it caused them to become a
 multitude.
 He brought to the hand of man the scepter of command.

¹⁵ *du-el-azag-ga* is doubtless a variant spelling of *du-azag-ga*. The sign *el* introduces an additional word for brightness, thus emphasizing *azag*.

tuš-gim-ka ba-[ni]-in-ib ušbar
 a-šar-šar-ra im-gú-gú-ne
 25 ud-ba-ki dar- r]a-e-n[e
 giš-bi dul bi-kur-ğar
 gub(?) du(?) bi
 nu

REVERSE

a-a ^de]n-[lil
 nà-ši-a
 nam-lù-ge
 ba ^den-tu-ge
 5 a-a ^den-lil
 dù-azag-ga šid-da dingir
 dù-azag-ga laḥ-ga-a dingir-ma-da-ra ab-u[ru
 den-tu ^den-lil-bi dù-azag-ga-ra n[e
 du ^dezinu-bi dù-azag-ta im-ma-da-r[a-ru

 10 šanabi-e amaš-a im-ma-ab-ḥab-
 ú-bi e-gar-ra-ra mu-un-a-ba-e-ne
^dezinu gan-e mu-un-im-i-am-ne
 lil-apin uraš-lah-bi mu-un-a-ba-e-ne

 šanabi amaš-a-na gub-ba-ni
 15 sib-amaš-a ḥi-li dù-dú-a
 gi-li-eš nam-na-gub-ba-ni
 dù-el¹⁵-azag-ga ḥi-li-il šub-am
 ga-ni-ta sag-gi-il mà-ni
 ib-gál an-na-ta tum-tum-a-ne
 20 dù ^dezinu-bi ḥat-tu ši-še-e-eš

 uru-azag-na ib-gál mu-da-an-gál-li-eš
 kalam-ma-gi-šag¹⁶-gál mu-gub an-gál-li-eš
 šeq-eš e-ka-sig im-sá-sá-e-ne
 gišgal-ma kalam-ma-ne gar mu-ni-ab-rug-rug kal-mê
 25 x¹⁷ kalam-ma ne-gig mu-un-ne-gál meš

 ab-a-tum-ra da-ki uš-ir a-ḥat-mê

¹⁶ *kalam-ma-gi-šag-gal*, literally 'the land, reeds are in the midst,' a very appropriate description of Babylonia.

¹⁷ The sign transcribed *x* is no. 241 in *The Origin of Babylonian Writing*. It has the meaning 'favor.' I have rendered it somewhat freely 'prosperity.'

The lord caused them to be and they came into existence.
 Companions calling them, with a man his wife he made
 them dwell.

At night as fitting companions they are together.

30 (sixty lines).

This text clearly gives us a new myth of the creation of man and the origin of civilization. It tells how the assembly of gods entered the mountain of heaven and earth, and how, because there was no vegetation on the earth, the gods held a consultation. At this point a relatively long statement of the non-existence of the chief features of agricultural civilization is introduced. In such statements Babylonian poets took especial delight. Three of the accounts of creation previously known contain such statements, and two of them are of considerable extent. At the end of this statement, you will remember, it is said that 'with Nintu the lord had not brought forth men.' Ug, the lion god, who was, as a later syllabary explains, Shamash, first came forth to plan. It is then sententiously stated:

Mankind he planned; many men were brought forth.

The verb for 'planned' is *zu*, which also means 'to know,' as in Genesis 4.1. Taken in connection with the previous statement that 'with Nintu the lord had not brought forth men' and with the following statement that 'many men were brought forth,' it means that Ug and Nintu became the divine parents of men.

It is further stated that

Food and sleep he planned for them;
 Clothing and dwellings he did not plan for them.

The lines that follow describe how men made reed huts such as are still found in the Babylonian marsh-lands, and how agriculture was begun. Here the obverse is concluded.

At the beginning of the reverse several lines are fragmentary. From the parts that remain it appears that some god is addressing Enlil. In this fragmentary address Duazagga, the heavenly ocean, is described as 'the way of the gods'—perhaps an allusion to the Milky Way. It would seem that all was not going well with men on the earth, so the god that is speaking proposes to form a dwelling for Ashnan, the god of Agriculture, outside of Duazagga. Apparently from what follows this new dwelling was upon the earth. The conditions were such that two-thirds

*u-mu-un mu-ne-eš-ib-gál mu-da-an-gál-li-eš
man-na gu-ne za¹⁸-ki dam-ne ne-ba-an-gub-eš-a*

30 *gig-bi-ir¹⁹ bar-a-gar hat-mê-eš
LX šu-ši LX.*

of the fold perished; whereupon Ashnan created plants and in addition caused it to rain on the earth. He created the moist cloud and the storm cloud. But after that the violent rains were destructive. His measures were helpful, but not sufficiently helpful; still one-third of the fold perished and the houses of rushes were swept away. The point of view of the text here is similar to the account of the creation discovered by Dr. Poebel; it mingles with the story of creation, not indeed the story of a flood, but one of destructive storms. Then a god (Enlil?) came down from his heavenly to his earthly dwelling and inaugurated city-civilization—cities as the elevated and fortified dwellings of an agricultural people. Conditions were thus made secure, and men could then multiply.

Several expressions toward the end of the document remind one of expressions in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. Thus

The lord caused them to be and they came into existence
(*umun mu-ne-eš-ib-gál mu-da-an-gál-li-eš*)

reminds us of Gen. 1.3: ‘God said, Let there be light and there was light.’ Again: ‘Companions calling them, with a man his wife he made them dwell,’ recalls Gen. 2.18: ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helpmeet for him,’ and Gen. 2.24: ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife.’ ‘At night as fitting companions they are together,’ is another way of saying as Gen. 2.23 does, ‘they shall be one flesh.’ The statements: ‘The scepter he brought forth to them,’ and ‘He brought to the hand of man the scepter of command,’ recall Gen. 1.28, where God gives man dominion over all lower orders of life.

The discovery of this text, which, as the palaeography shows,

¹⁸ *za* = *amēlu*, see *Origin of Babylonian Writing*, no. 523², and Delitzsch, *Sumerisches Glossar*, p. 218.

¹⁹ *gig-bi-ir*, literally ‘in their night.’

belongs to the Cassite period or the First Dynasty of Babylon, adds emphasis to the fondness of the Babylonians for giving expression to their religious ideas through myths of creation, which they employed to a greater degree and in a greater variety of ways than any other people of the ancient East.

I have hitherto spoken only of literary expressions of the Babylonian religious spirit, because at this distance it is upon these that we must mainly depend for our knowledge. It should however be noted in conclusion that, as in all the rest of the ancient world, the whole organized life of Babylonia was an expression of its religious spirit. Kings consulted the gods before entering upon any great undertaking. At the dawn of Babylonian history Eanatum sought the will of Ningirsu before undertaking his war with Umma, and during the last reigns of the Assyrian kingdom Esarhaddon sought his oracles, and the seers of Ashurbanapal had their dreams such as that in which the goddess Ishtar revealed herself and her will at the river Ididi. The Bronze Gates of Balawat show us that an army did not cross a river without first propitiating its god by sacrifice. In the code of Hammurapi it is taken for granted that an oath in the presence of a god is sufficient to render a man's word trustworthy, even when it cannot be corroborated by witnesses. Evil spirits as well as good left their impress on life and institutions. Demons of sickness and misfortune were driven away by incantations and ceremonies. It is quite evident that men lived in a vivid consciousness of the supernatural. The type of religion that Babylonian life expressed was vigorous and natural, if sometimes crude. That revealed in Babylonia was gentler and more humane than that in Assyria, but both partook of those human frailties that are prominent in early men and are not altogether absent from our modern Christian world. If the code of Hammurapi betrays a particular fondness for the death penalty, so did English law in the days of Cromwell. If Assyrian wars make us shudder with the tales of frightfulness over which her monarchs gloated, there are at least some in our own time who could scarcely cast a stone at her. Through both the literature and life of Babylonia and Assyria we behold one of the most important of the ancient nations feeling after God, and giving us a most instructive expression, if not one of the most important, of the religious spirit.